

# Sales Excellence Survey 2017



Uncovering  
the secrets  
of sales  
success

The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.  
The last is to say thank you

– Max De Pree



Dear Reader,

It is my pleasure to present to you the Sales Excellence Survey 2017 – Global Report. This has been in the making for 6 months, covering 926 respondents from 20 Countries. What you hear are voices from more than 500 enterprises worldwide, across 13 industry categories. The diligence of so many responses covering 53 key areas of Sales Excellence, gives us reason to conduct this study every 4 years.

My sincere thanks to all respondents, as well as to the internal & external stakeholders at Mercuri International who have contributed in the making of this study.

The outputs of this study are available in four configurations: the first three are Global, Country and Organization level presentations of responses. Fourth, this Global Report at hand, giving you an overview of the Global Survey results, without taking you into greater details that you will find in the above mentioned outputs.

The Sales Excellence Surveys is an objective study of the reality we find ourselves in - as sales professionals - from time to time. Each individual & organization are best positioned to make sense of the outcomes of this study, in ways that are meaningful to further their aspirations.

How can you utilize this study to take your sales to a higher level? To begin with, you and your leadership team can read this report and the related outputs to discuss and share your reflections at a global, country, industry, size and position level; also in relation to your own position, if you are a participant who has opted to receive these results. Taken together I am sure you will arrive at some valuable secrets of sales excellence to work towards .

Needless to say, at Mercuri International, the outcomes of this study have been shaping our own performances as the world's largest sales performance consultancy, as it does for our discerning Customers in 50 countries the world over.

Coming to you as you get ready to put your plans together for 2017, this report could not have been timed better. I take this opportunity to wish you a successful new year ahead.

Frank Herbertz  
President & CEO  
Mercuri International Group AB

December 2016



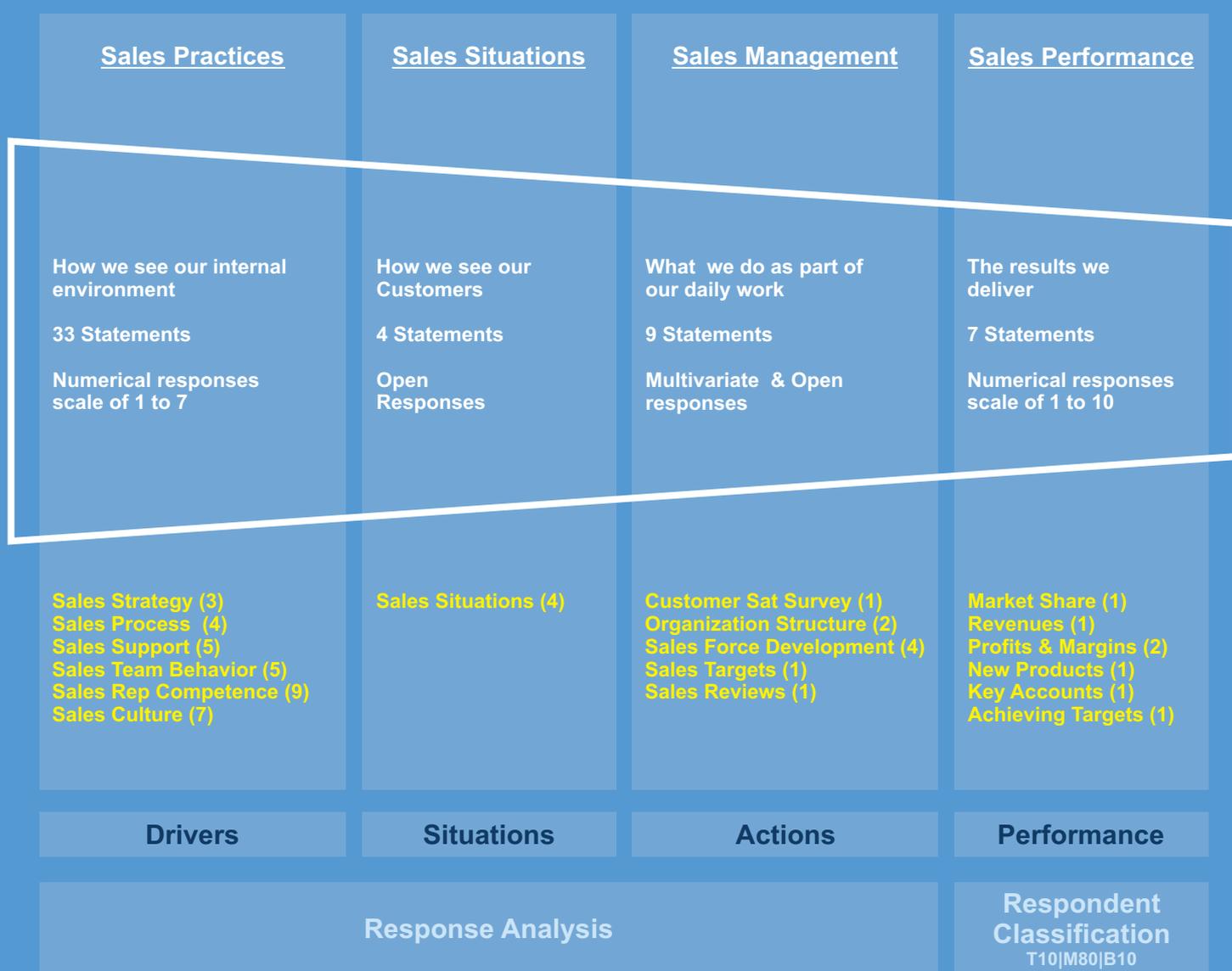
## Sales Excellence Survey 2017

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Survey Framework & Methodology	6
Drivers of Sales Excellence	
Global	11
Drivers by position of respondent	14
Drivers by size of sales organization	16
Drivers by Industry Category	19
Response Analysis	
How to read	27
Sales Strategy, Process & Support Tools	28
Sales Team Behavior & Sales Rep Competence	30
Sales Force Development & Sales Culture	32
Sales Org Structure	34
Sales Targets & Sales Reviews	36

Exhibit 1

## Sales Excellence Survey 2017

### Survey Framework





## Sales Excellence Survey 2017 - Methodology

What makes sales leaders tick?

How do some companies excel in sales? What drives their success regardless of sector, size or economic conditions? Do their stories offer insights that can help replicate their success?

In search of answers to these questions and more, Mercuri International undertakes periodic worldwide surveys. The latest of these surveys was commissioned in mid 2016.

Seeing through a global lens in 20 countries, the survey had 926 respondents, who rated themselves on 7 performance - sales results - parameters using a 1 to 10 scale, as seen in the Survey Framework illustrated in Exhibit 1 shown on the left. These scores were used to arrive at the Top 10 (T10), Bottom 10 (B10) and Middle 80 (M80) percentile performers, country wise.

The respondents also assigned scores on a scale of 1 to 7, to 33 sales practices across areas as diverse as Sales Strategy, Sales Process, Support Tools, Sales Behaviors, Sales Rep Competence and Perception / Image of Sales function. Details are in Exhibit 2 overleaf.

Difference in scores assigned to these drivers by Top 10 performers and the Bottom 10 turned the spotlight on key differentiators that helped the Top 10 excel. This is the 'big picture' as seen through a single global lens. The diversity of respondent base makes the findings universal in their application value. It does not end here.

At Mercuri International, we appreciate the diverse environments we find ourselves in as a Sales Community. Our quest to uncover secrets of sales excellence in ways that benefit such a diverse community, makes us take a closer look into our world through three other lenses.

## Exhibit 2

### Sales Excellence Survey 2017

#### 33 Statements concerning Sales Practices - Rating scale 1 to 7

- 1 Strategy**
  - 1.1 Your sales strategy is clearly defined
  - 1.2 Your sales strategy is documented in writing
  - 1.3 You regularly communicate and discuss your strategy with the people involved in sales
  
- 2 Sales Processes**
  - 2.1 You have clearly defined sales processes/workflows (e.g. for sales tasks like new Customer acquisition or loyalty)
  - 2.2 A detailed description of the steps of the processes/workflows is documented in written form
  - 2.3 For each step of the sales process/workflow you have defined training modules, checklists/instruments
  - 2.4 Team selling within sales is an important aspect in your sales practice
  - 2.5 Team selling together with other functions is an important aspect in your sales practice
  
- 3 Sales Support Tools**
  - 3.1 Your CRM tool is integral to the company, populated with relevant information and regularly updated by the sales teams
  - 3.2 Social media plays an important role in communication with your prospects and Customers
  - 3.3 Social media will be very important for your future communication to Customers
  - 3.4 Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers
  
- 4 Sales Force Please rate your sales team strength in the following behaviors**
  - 4.1 Your sales team work in a structured way (planning activity, fixing priorities for Customers and products)
  - 4.2 Your sales team has a high social competence/can establish strong relationships
  - 4.3 Your sales team has a comprehensive knowledge of their Customer's business, processes and markets
  - 4.4 Your sales team is service oriented, they satisfy the Customer needs
  - 4.5 Your sales team is assertive, convincing, resistant to failure and have strong charisma
  
- 5 Sales force Your sales reps are very competent in**
  - 5.1 questioning and listening
  - 5.2 creating a need
  - 5.3 making concrete your added value
  - 5.4 creating a customized offer/solution
  - 5.5 handling objections and Customer resistance
  - 5.6 negotiations
  - 5.7 closing and follow up
  - 5.8 presentations
  - 5.9 internal communications and teamworking
  
- 6 Corporate's view/perception of the sales function**
  - 6.1 Your corporate strategy defines explicit sales topics
  - 6.2 Your management team is dedicated to the sales function
  - 6.3 The image of sales inside your company is excellent
  - 6.4 You have a culture whereby every employee regards his/her self as a sales person
  - 6.5 You have someone responsible for sales in your Management Board
  - 6.6 Your corporate structure fully supports cross functional approaches which are initiated by sales (e.g. matrix structures)
  - 6.7 You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (ie e-learning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)

## 3 lenses: Taking a closer look at sales excellence



Our world is too varied to be painted with a single brush. While universal perspectives are valid and valuable, we all know one size doesn't fit all. So, in addition to seeing through a global lens, we use three different lenses to take a closer look at drivers of sales excellence:

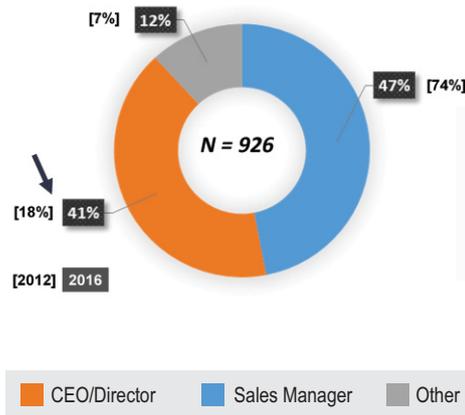
- 🔍 Position of respondent in the Organization – 3 Categories
- 🔍 Size of Sales Organization – 5 Categories
- 🔍 Nature of industry – 13 Categories

### 🔍 Position of respondents

Respondents were drawn from three categories:

- 🔍 CEO / Director – 41 percent of the respondents were CEOs in the current survey, which is more than 2x the participation in the last survey of 2012
- 🔍 Sales Managers – Accounted for 47 percent of participation
- 🔍 Others – The rest made up 12 percent of the respondents

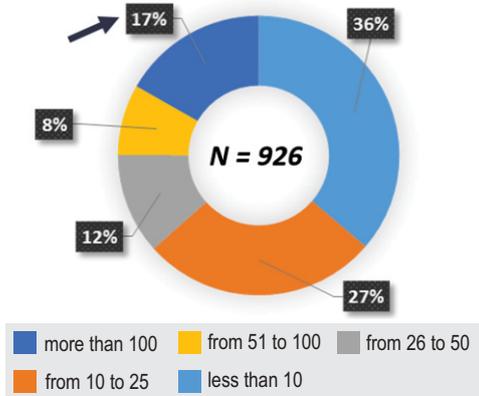
The participation of the CEOs was nearly equal to that of the Sales Managers, balancing perspectives drawn by the Survey



### 🔍 Size of Sales Organization

The responses were from sales organizations of 5 sizes:

- 🔍 100 plus sales people.. Participation doubled since 2012
- 🔍 51 to 100 sales people
- 🔍 26 to 50 sales people
- 🔍 10 to 25 sales people
- 🔍 Less than 10 sales people



### 🔍 Industry Category

The Survey captures responses by 13 industry categories. Of these, 3 categories - raw material, media and others - are excluded for industry wise analysis of sales excellence drivers on sample size and homogeneity considerations. The industry wise drivers are analyzed in relation to the state of each industry and the factors likely to impact sales.



It is possible that an observation appears repeatedly when seen through more than one lens. The more often this happens, the more significant the observation is, as a driver of excellence.



## Sales Practices

How we see our internal environment

33 Statements

Numerical responses  
scale of 1 to 7

Sales Strategy (3)  
Sales Process (4)  
Sales Support (5)  
Sales Team Behavior (5)  
Sales Rep Competence (9)  
Sales Culture (7)

## Drivers



# The Global Top 10 Drivers of Sales Excellence 2017

Here are the top 10 Sales Practices on which Top Performers rate themselves significantly higher compared to their bottom peers, listed in order of decreasing differences between the ratings. These Sales Practices could be among key drivers of Sales Excellence for Top Performers.



**Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers**



Top performing companies score high in allocating sales resources for each of their Customers such that an account management plan specific to the requirement of every individual Customer is in place.



**Your corporate strategy defines explicit sales topics<sup>^</sup>**



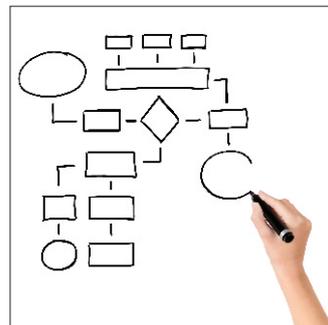
Companies at the top of the performance spectrum are inclined to take sales beyond being an execution function and leverage the strategic value of sales by ensuring that their corporate strategies include explicit sales elements.



**Your sales strategy is documented in writing<sup>^</sup>**



Only 14% of all people in a company know its strategy, say studies. Top performers seem to overcome this risk by documenting their strategy, for consistency of communication.



**A detailed description of the steps of the processes / workflows is documented in written form<sup>^</sup>**



Flawless execution being the hallmark of good sales, Top performing companies attach a premium to documenting detailed descriptions of the sales processes and work flows.



**For each step of the sales process / workflow you have defined training modules, checklists / instruments<sup>^</sup>**



A process is only as good as its implementation. Top performing companies don't stop with defining sales processes and workflows. They get better at supporting their people in living those processes by developing training modules, checklists and instruments for each step of the process.



**Your corporate structure fully supports cross functional approaches which are initiated by sales (e.g. matrix structures)<sup>^</sup>**



Top performing companies are far ahead at elimination of silos enabling sales to initiate and adopt a cross functional approach with other teams, to address Customer requirements holistically.

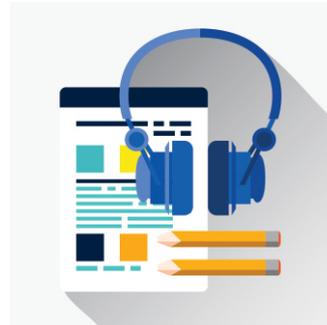
# The Global Top 10 Drivers of Sales Excellence 2017..



**Your CRM tool is integral to the company, populated with relevant information and regularly updated by the sales teams**



At top performing companies, CRM serves to hardwire the whole organization to Customer centric approaches. These companies ensure their sales teams update the CRM regularly so as to stay in tune with Customer requirements in real time.



**You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (i.e. e-learning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)^**



Top performing companies leverage the potential of technology in supporting learning initiatives and appear to prefer an approach which blends class room training with virtual learning to develop sales competencies in their sales teams.



**The image of sales inside your company is excellent**



Top performing companies recognize the inherent need for achievement and gratification in the sales mindset. They hold Sales in high esteem. The intrinsic pride of belonging to such an environment in itself could be a powerful driver of performance for sales people.



**Your sales strategy is clearly defined**



Defining a Sales Strategy is the first step to ensuring alignment around its objectives. Doing this much better than others could be one of the big enablers of sales success at top performing companies, getting sales people in diverse and dispersed locations to rally around the sales cause, with clarity and consistency.

Of the 33 sales practices that respondents rated themselves on, the above 10 showed the maximum differences in ratings between top and bottom performers. These could be practices that the top would want to get better at, and the others would do well to catch up in pursuit of their aspirations.

Among these 10, marked with a ^ are drivers that stood among the Top 10 drivers of excellence in the 2012 study as well.

Where does this leave the other 23 sales practices? Well, as we go further down from the Top 10 drivers of Sales Excellence, the gap between ratings assigned to a particular sales practice by top and bottom performers gets narrower, suggesting that these practices are being adopted to an equal degree by all organizations irrespective of where they belong on the performance spectrum. They are likely hygiene.

Would the drivers of Sales Excellence change depending on the eyes that see them? Would they change depending on the position of the respondent, the size of the organization or the nature of industry? Or is it that sales is sales wherever you are and whatever you sell? Read on..

## Sales Practices

How we see our internal environment

33 Statements

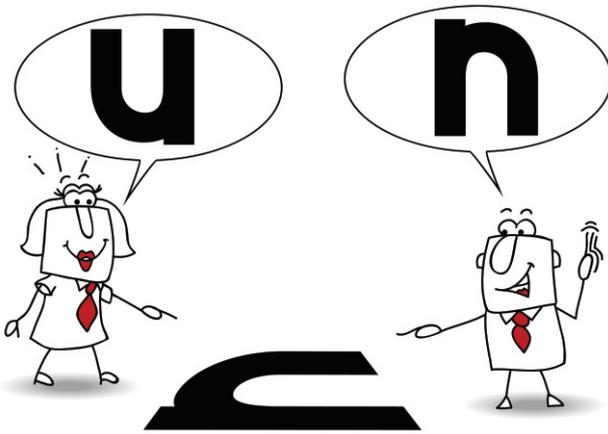
Numerical responses  
scale of 1 to 7

Sales Strategy (3)  
Sales Process (4)  
Sales Support (5)  
Sales Team Behavior (5)  
Sales Rep Competence (9)  
Sales Culture (7)

## Drivers



## Different strokes.. Sales Excellence Drivers differ by Position of Respondent



What you see is a function of what you do and who you are. Do drivers of Sales Excellence vary with position of the respondent? Are there drivers that are common irrespective of the eyes that see them?

Global drivers of Sales Excellence common to at least 2 out of 3 Positions of Respondents are:

- For each step of the sales process/workflow you have defined training modules, checklists/instruments
- Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers
- Your sales strategy is documented in writing
- Your CRM tool is integral to the company, populated with relevant information and regularly updated by the sales teams
- The image of sales inside your company is excellent

### Top drivers of sales excellence by position of respondent:

Respondent Position	Top three drivers of Sales Excellence
CEO / Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers*</li> <li>• Your sales reps are very competent in closing and follow up</li> <li>• Your sales reps are very competent in negotiations</li> </ul>
Sales Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your corporate strategy defines explicit sales topics*</li> <li>• Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers*</li> <li>• The image of sales inside your company is excellent*</li> </ul>
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your sales strategy is documented in writing*</li> <li>• Your sales strategy is clearly defined*</li> <li>• Your sales reps are very competent in creating a need</li> </ul>

\*Common to Global Top 10 Drivers of Sales excellence 2017



Sales Excellence is as much about strategy as it is about skills and processes. While the view from the corner room points to processes and skills, the view from the middle points to strategy and process. The middle also feels it important for Sales to be seen as carriers of excellence. Irrespective of the eyes that see, sales competence is a distinct driver of sales excellence.

## Sales Practices

How we see our internal environment

33 Statements

Numerical responses scale of 1 to 7

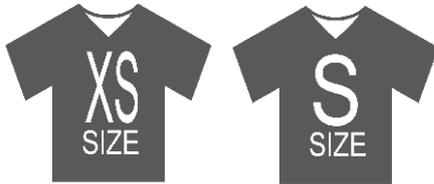
Sales Strategy (3)  
Sales Process (4)  
Sales Support (5)  
Sales Team Behavior (5)  
Sales Rep Competence (9)  
Sales Culture (7)

## Drivers



## Different strokes.. Sales Excellence Drivers differ by Sales Organization Size

Do drivers of Sales Excellence vary with size of the Sales Organization? Are there drivers that are common across sizes?



Global drivers of Sales Excellence common to at least 3 out of 5 Organization Size categories are:

- Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers
- Your sales strategy is documented in writing
- For each step of the sales process I workflow you have defined training modules, checklists I instruments
- Your CRM tool is integral to the company, populated with relevant information and regularly updated by the sales teams
- You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (ie e-learning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)

### Size wise top drivers of sales excellence:

Size of Sales Organisation	Top three drivers of Sales Excellence
> 100 sales people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your salespeople are very competent in negotiation</li> <li>• Your salespeople are very competent in closing &amp; follow-up</li> <li>• Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers*</li> </ul>
51 – 100 sales people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (ie e-learning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)*</li> <li>• You have someone responsible for sales in your Management Board</li> <li>• Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers*</li> </ul>
26 – 50 sales people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers*</li> <li>• For each step of the sales process/workflow you have defined training modules, checklists/instruments*</li> <li>• You have a culture whereby every employee regards his/her self as a sales person</li> </ul>
10 – 25 sales people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have clearly defined sales processes/workflows (e.g. for sales tasks like new Customer acquisition or loyalty)</li> <li>• A detailed description of the steps of the processes/workflows is documented in written form*</li> <li>• Your sales strategy is documented in writing*</li> </ul>
<10 sales people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your corporate strategy defines explicit sales topics*</li> <li>• Your sales strategy is documented in writing*</li> <li>• The image of sales inside your company is excellent*</li> </ul>

\*Common to Global Top 10 Drivers of Sales excellence 2017

- 🔍 Sales is becoming more strategic. Capabilities in systematic Account Management differentiate performers across size categories.
- 🔍 As Organizations get larger, there is a clear reliance on processes and skills. Top performers among the large organizations find their edge in a systematic account management planning process, and in sharpening skills in negotiation, closing and follow-up.
- 🔍 Small sized high performing organizations in contrast strive to create a culture where everyone feels they are a salesperson. Their sales strategy and process are documented in writing, while their corporate strategy defines explicit sales topics.



## Sales Practices

How we see our internal environment

33 Statements

Numerical responses  
scale of 1 to 7

Sales Strategy (3)  
Sales Process (4)  
Sales Support (5)  
Sales Team Behavior (5)  
Sales Rep Competence (9)  
Sales Culture (7)

## Drivers



## Different strokes.. Sales Excellence Drivers differ by Industry Category



Do drivers of Sales Excellence vary by the nature of the Industry? Are there drivers that are common across industries?

**One Global driver of Sales Excellence that is common in 7 of 10 Industry Categories:**

- You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (i.e. e-learning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)

**Other Global drivers that figure in more than 1 industry include:**

- Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers
- Your sales strategy is documented in writing
- A detailed description of the steps of the processes/workflows is documented in written form
- The image of sales inside your company is excellent
- Your CRM tool is integral to the company, populated with relevant information and regularly updated by the sales teams

## Different strokes.. Sales Excellence Drivers differ by Industry Category

### Banking, Financial Services & Insurance



#### Top 3 drivers of Sales Excellence:

- You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (i.e. e-learning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)^
- For each step of the sales process/workflow you have defined training modules, checklists/instruments^
- Social media plays an important role in communication with your prospects and Customers

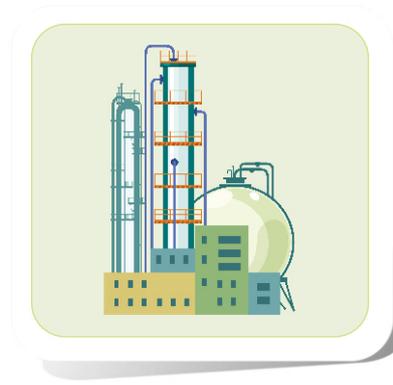
The increasing digitization of banking and financial services, has called for shifts in internal and external strategies of companies in all areas including sales. For instance, in Europe, there is a distinct movement towards 'direct and self-service banking'.

As Customer and employee touchpoints go increasingly digital, it becomes important to adopt social media as a preferred tool for Customer communication and also use a blended approach to learning sales competencies.

Since product or service differentiation in this industry means packaging different processes in varying configurations, to suit specific needs of Customers, it becomes imperative to develop process specific training modules and instruments.

^ Common to Global Top 10 Drivers of Sales Excellence

### Chemical



#### Top 3 drivers of Sales Excellence:

- Your CRM tool is integral to the company, populated with relevant information and regularly updated by the sales teams^
- You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (i.e. e-learning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)^
- Your sales reps are very competent in closing, follow up and presentations

According to studies on chemical industry 3 major forces will drive the industry going forward – First, future growth will happen more through incremental innovations than from large scale breakthroughs. Second, fresh avenues for business will be in new and emerging markets.

Together these two forces require that the sales force is highly competent in essential sales skills such as closing, follow up and presentations. Entry into new markets often call for quick progression up the sales learning curve, for which a blended approach to learning is helpful.

Third, for an industry like chemicals that has invested heavily in automation and information technology, leveraging the investments in IT and digital media can provide a distinct cost advantage.

This is in alignment with the survey finding that a CRM tool is integral to chemical companies populated with relevant information and regularly updated by sales.

## Different strokes.. Sales Excellence Drivers differ by Industry Category

### Consumer Goods, Retail



#### Top 3 drivers of Sales Excellence:

- Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers<sup>^</sup>
- You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (i.e. e-learning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)<sup>^</sup>
- Team selling within sales is an important aspect in your sales practice

Globalization, growing internet penetration, continuous innovation, online sales and entry of micro brands are changing the consumer goods/retail landscape. As conventional store selling is forced to reinvent itself into an omni-channel approach, even multinational brands make a conscious effort to personalize their offerings to suit requirements of local and global clients.

 This accentuates the need for client specific account planning and team selling. Further, keeping pace with such rapid change in products and processes while minimizing off the floor people development time necessitates a blended learning approach.

### Construction



#### Top 3 drivers of Sales Excellence:

- For each step of the sales process/workflow you have defined training modules, checklists/instruments<sup>^</sup>
- A detailed description of the steps of the processes/workflows is documented in written form<sup>^</sup>
- You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (i.e. e-learning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)<sup>^</sup>

Tumbling energy and commodity prices have generally exerted a downward pressure on construction activity globally. Weak and inconsistent economic growth in local geographies has also depressed spend on construction activity. The other dominant industry trend is the rapid pace at which construction companies are going digital.

 Against the backdrop of these factors, top performers in construction industry see a process driven approach to sales to be an important differentiator. Detailed documentation of steps involved in the sales process and having defined training modules and instruments for each of these steps, make sales process driven and help sell in demand deficient markets. With companies digitizing fast, blended learning is the preferred approach for imparting sales competencies.

<sup>^</sup> Common to Global Top 10 Drivers of Sales Excellence

## Different strokes.. Sales Excellence Drivers differ by Industry Category

### Logistics & Automotive



#### Top 3 drivers of Sales Excellence:

- The image of sales inside your company is excellent<sup>^</sup>
- Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers<sup>^</sup>
- Your corporate structure fully supports cross functional approaches which are initiated by sales (e.g. matrix structures)<sup>^</sup>

The key challenges in logistics and automotive sectors involve meeting constantly changing Customer expectations, on time delivery, real time information on delivery status, customized offerings to suit varying needs and cost control.

🔍 It takes an empowered sales team which is held in esteem within the company to accomplish such diverse and demanding objectives.

🔍 In order to meet changing Customer expectations, deliver on time and customize solutions for varying needs, Customer specific account level planning and cross functional approach to selling are ideal strategies which are rated as significant differentiators in the Survey.

### Manufacturing/Industry



#### Top 3 drivers of Sales Excellence:

- Your sales team work in a structured way (planning activity, fixing priorities for Customers and products)
- You regularly communicate and discuss your strategy with the people involved in sales
- A detailed description of the steps of the processes/workflows is documented in written form<sup>^</sup>

For manufacturing industry, globally, the key sales challenges include - lead generation pressures, longer sales cycles, higher compliance burden on the back of more and complex regulation and weaker post sale support due to widening skill gaps in the manufacturing work force.

Such challenge calls for a strong sense of alignment towards goals across functions, and the ability to execute to perfection right upto the last mile.

🔍 So, the top performing manufacturing companies get better at having their sales teams work in a structured way, fully aligned to their company's strategy. Such effectiveness demands proper step by step documentation of a structured sales process, as reflected in the survey findings.

<sup>^</sup> Common to Global Top 10 Drivers of Sales Excellence

## Different strokes.. Sales Excellence Drivers differ by Industry Category

### Pharma, Medical & Diagnostics



#### Top 3 drivers of Sales Excellence:

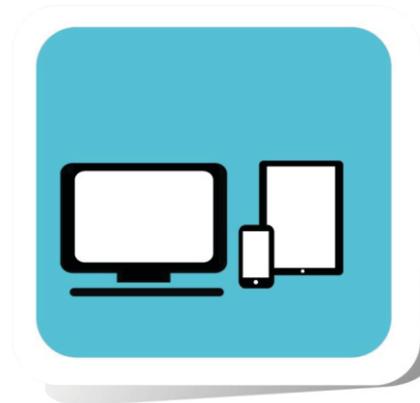
- Your corporate strategy defines explicit sales topics<sup>^</sup>
- Your sales reps are very competent in questioning and listening
- You have someone responsible for sales in your Management Board

Significant trends that mark this sector include closer regulation, demand for anywhere-anytime care and specialty services, increasing influence of technology in diagnostics, preventive health and treatment.

The industry rides these trends often with mergers that aim for better scale and cost economies. There is also the need to find synergies in go to market for effective Customer experience.

🔍 These call for a strong culture of sales reflected in board level presence for sales and a corporate strategy with explicit sales elements. The sales force should possess good questioning and listening skills to deal with market complexities and diversity of Customer needs.

### Software & IT



#### Top 3 drivers of Sales Excellence:

- A detailed description of the steps of the processes/workflows is documented in written form<sup>^</sup>
- For each step of the sales process/workflow you have defined training modules, checklists/instruments<sup>^</sup>
- You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (ie e-learning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)<sup>^</sup>

World over, software and IT companies face sales challenges stemming from complexity of products, heightened security concerns among clients, competition from disruptive technologies, tighter budgets on tech spend and evaluation of software in relation to larger business goals.

🔍 Their inherent flair for logic, and the available technology infrastructure permeate their responses to such challenge, in business process and people development initiatives.

🔍 Consequently, learning agility of the sales force, leveraging a blended approach to skill building and a process orientation to selling independent of the salesperson, come across as the answers to these challenges, as reflected in the survey findings.

<sup>^</sup> Common to Global Top 10 Drivers of Sales Excellence

## Different strokes.. Sales Excellence Drivers differ by Industry Category

### Telecom



#### Top 3 drivers of Sales Excellence:

- Your corporate structure fully supports cross functional approaches which are initiated by sales (e.g. matrix structures)^
- You have clearly defined sales processes/workflows (e.g. for sales tasks like new Customer acquisition or loyalty)
- Your corporate strategy defines explicit sales topics^

Growing convergence of telecom with IT and media, the rise of what is referred to as the 'app economy', relentless quest for fool proofing privacy and data security are among the shifts that telecom is witnessing. The Customer expectations and requirements are undergoing a transformation as a result of these shifts.

 So, top performers in the sector seek to make sales integral to their corporate strategy by including explicit sales elements in their strategy documents. Besides they also resort to cross functional selling given the hybrid solutions that Customers expect more often (Telecom + IT or Telecom + Media, a customized app etc.) and have clearly defined sales processes and workflows to address varying Customer needs like versatility of solution (typically in a new acquisition) and robustness of security (to an existing client to foster loyalty).

### Utilities



#### Top 3 drivers of Sales Excellence:

- Your sales team is assertive, convincing, resistant to failure and have strong charisma
- Your sales reps are very competent in creating a need
- Your sales reps are very competent in presentations

Maintaining uninterrupted supply at competitive prices, replacing an aging infrastructure, consumer demands, cyber security, increasing number of innovative competitors like micro grids, sustainability imperatives and green regulation are among the important challenges faced by utility companies world over.

 While demand is more or less assured, the sales force is expected to effectively manage service delivery and Customer experience. Hence the emphasis of top performers in this sector is all on strong basic sales skills.

^ Common to Global Top 10 Drivers of Sales Excellence



## Recap: The basis of the analysis

- 1 Survey questionnaire asked respondents to assign a score from 1 to 7 on 33 statements concerning sales practices / drivers of excellence in their company. These statements are listed in Exhibit 2 on Page 7.
- 2 The Top 10 percentile performers (T10) and the Bottom 10 percentile Performers (B10) were arrived at country wise based on their responses on a scale of 1 to 10, for 7 parameters - sales results – as seen in Exhibit 1 on Page 6 – Survey Framework - last column to the right. The rest belong to Middle 80 percentile performers (M80).
- 3 The total Top 10 of the Survey universe representing the global is the sum total of country wise Top 10.
- 4 Difference in scores assigned to these drivers by Top 10 performers and the Bottom 10 - **the T10 minus B10 Scores** - clearly indicate the differentiators that helped the Top 10 excel in performance.

## How to read the pages that follow

What you see in the forthcoming pages are the responses to 46 statements – Sales Practices/Drivers (33), Sales Situations (4), Sales Management actions (9), as shown in the Survey Framework – Exhibit 1 – Page 6.

The 33 Driver statements are sub grouped as – Sales Strategy, Sales Process, Support tools, Behaviours, Competence and Perception/Image of Sales function - alongside the mean score of the T10 minus B10 difference. for each statement. This is illustrated in bar graphs. See a sample below:

### Practices in (3) Sales Support



**The longer the bar, the greater the difference, and the greater the opportunity.** Statement 3.4 has the maximum T10 minus B10 difference at 1.92 points on a scale of 1 to 7. This means the T10 does a much better job of planning their account management for every Customer. Assuming a maximum T10 score of 7, a difference of 1.92 means the B10 is at 5.08. One can therefore say that on this parameter, T10 is 40% ahead of their B10 peers. For an aspiring T10 player focusing on this means exploiting that much opportunity.

**The shorter the bar the more that statement is likely to be hygiene.** Statement 3.3 has a T10 minus B10 score of 0.71. Once again, assuming a T10 score of 7, a difference of 0.71 means the B10 is at 6.29. The T10 is about 11% ahead of B10 here. Not a very significant difference as we saw in 3.4 above. All players across the performance spectrum seem to practice these to an equal extent.

The survey goes beyond the 33 statements that reveal how we see our world. It also goes into the situations we find ourselves in and what we do here, as Sales Managers. To this end, there are an additional 4 statements under the theme Sales Situations, and 9 more statements on 'Sales Management' which capture how often we do a Customer Satisfaction Survey, how we structure our sales organization, how we develop our people, how we set goals and review their performance.

A collective reflective discussion among you and your leadership group around how you fare against these 46 statements vs your Country and Global peers is sure to light up some sparks in taking your sales to a higher level.

Read on..

## Sales is becoming more strategic

Clearly defining sales strategy and documenting it in writing come across as key differentiators of sales excellence.

Top performers are far ahead in immaculate processes that spelt every step of the workflow in writing, and supporting adoption with specific training modules, checklists/instruments.

Top performers encouraged team selling within sales and with other functions, leveraging the spirit of Customer Centricity.

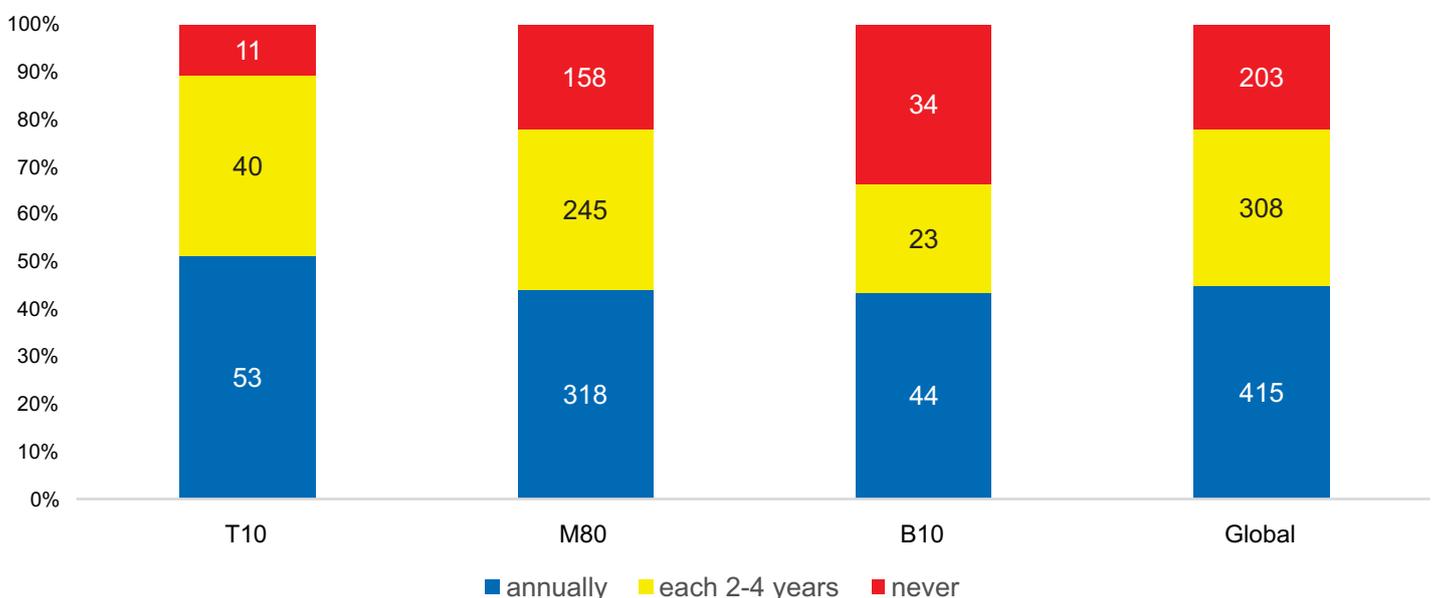
Companies that did well also ensured that resources are made available for planning and managing the accounts of all Customers at an enterprise level . These efforts were backed by a fully functional CRM tool and use of social media for Customer communication.

Better performing companies did more frequent Customer Satisfaction Surveys and companies at the bottom were observed to be more prone to skip surveys.

## Practices in (1) Sales Strategy (2) Sales Process (3) Sales Support



## Sales Management: How often do you invest in Customer Satisfaction Survey?





## Competence inspires confidence

As sales activity becomes increasingly consultative to serve better informed Customers with an array of choices, resilient and charismatic sales teams who are service oriented, have intimate knowledge of Customer requirements, high levels of social competence and a structured way of working are big differentiators for the top performers.

The Survey findings show that nurturing competencies in need creation, value tangibilisation, effective follow up for closure, objection handling and negotiation and presentation skills make a difference, underlining the need for strong basic selling skills.

Customers are seen to be less receptive to sales pitch and less aware of what they need. This trend necessitates solution selling to create value. The perception that Customers are less aware of what they need and their solutions to meet them merits discussion in appropriate forums as it seemingly contradicts widely held view that Customers are getting increasingly autonomous with rising digital penetration.

## Practices in (4) Sales Team Behavior (5) Sales Rep Competence



■ T10 minus B10 Rating on a scale of 1 to 7

## Sales Situations: How do we see the Customers we meet?

What percentage of your sales situations are linked to the following descriptions (estimation to add up to 100 % in total)	Situation 1		Situation 2	
	We have generally overcome any objections raised by current and potential Customers	We meet mainly Customers who are open and receptive to us	We meet existing and potential Customers who know their needs and solutions to meet them	We meet existing and potential Customers who don't know exactly what they need and what kind of solution can meet their needs
T10	44	56	61	39
M80	45	55	56	44
B10	44	56	51	49
<b>2016 Global</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44</b>
	↑	↑	↑	↑
<b>2012 Global</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>30</b>

## People Development – The highest calling of leadership

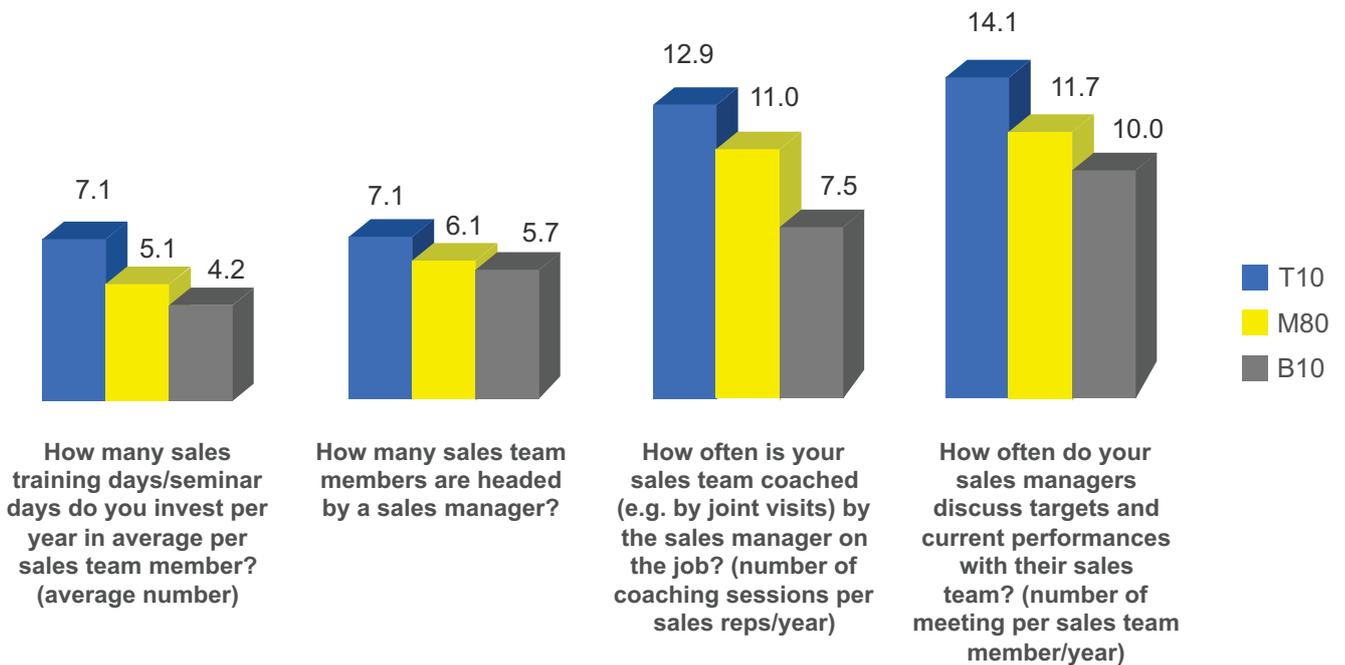
Top performers scored significantly higher over those at the bottom in terms of time invested in coaching by sales managers, frequency of performance reviews and number of training and seminar days. Even though top performers invest much more than their bottom peers in people development, they do not seem to rate their sales reps relatively higher on sales behaviors and competencies. This suggests that either their investments are not delivering the change they seek, or that they continuously keep raising the bar on people competencies in response to the demands of the marketplace. Either way, the survey reiterates the importance top performers place on investing right in people development.

## Culture is everything

Today's sales force is time starved and hard pressed to learn on the go. Learning agility required of salespersons today, is ideally supported by blending virtual with classroom learning. Top performers had an 'everyone is in sales' culture that encouraged cross functional approaches. Inclusion of explicit sales topics in corporate strategy, excellent image of the sales function and Board level visibility for sales all of which helped embed a healthy sales culture, are clear differentiators. Four of the Top ten drivers of sales excellence come from corporate view of sales and two more are from sales strategy. Clearly commitment of top management to sales function is critical.

## Sales Management: Sales Force Development

Sales Teams in Top performing organizations have..



### Practices in (6) Sales culture: Corporate view of the sales function



■ T10 minus B10 Rating on a scale of 1 to 7

## **Structure follows strategy**

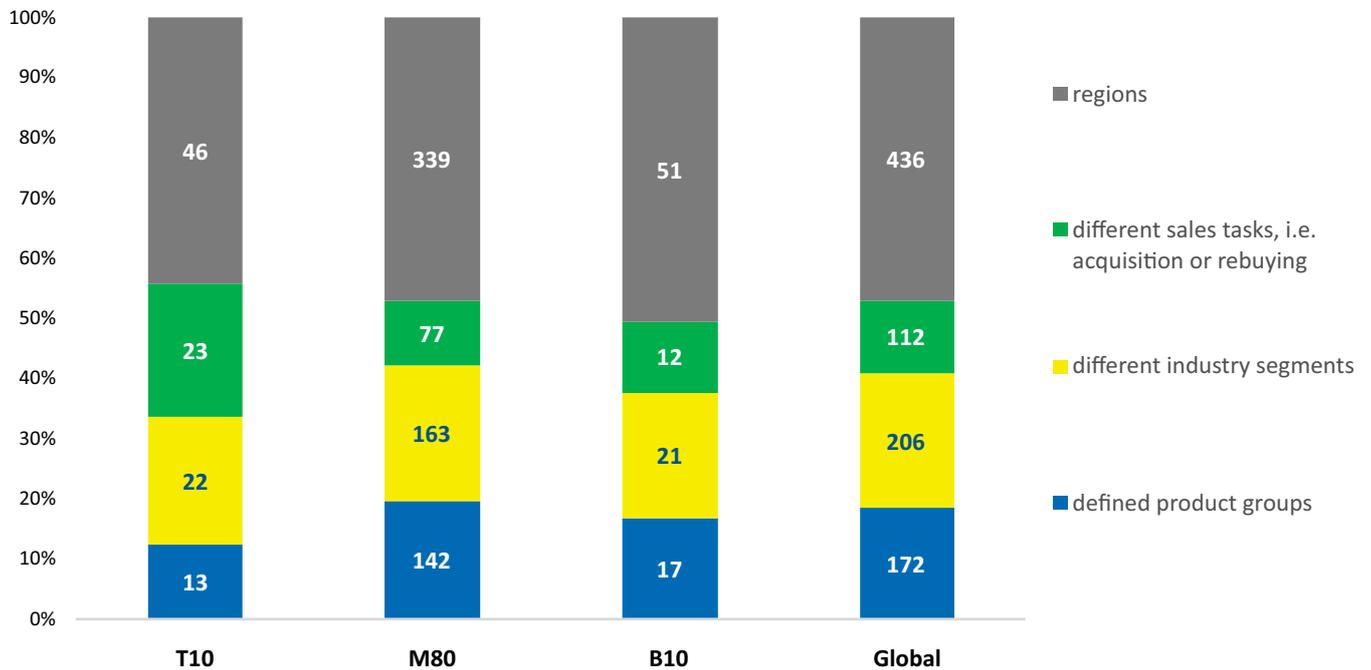
While most companies surveyed organize their sales force basis territory, the top performers additionally structure sales around the nature of sales effort also – acquisition / rebuying. They seem to appreciate the diversity of challenges involved in breaking into a new account vs enhancing share of wallet in an existing relationship and the very different mindsets and skillsets it takes to accomplish such challenge.

## **Leverage structure.. Nurture Key Accounts**

Top performers seem to see their Key Accounts as valuable as family silver. They differentiate themselves by allocating higher share of exclusive resources to manage key accounts. Such allocation is practiced by 85 percent of top performers against 56 percent of their bottom peers.

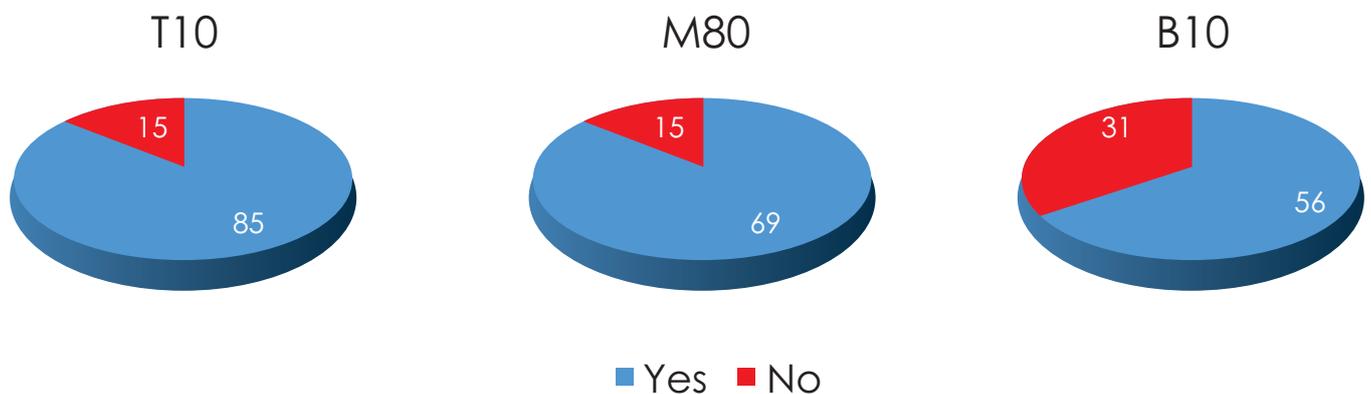
## Sales Management: Organization Structure

### Do you have different sales force structured for:



## Sales Management: Organization Structure

### Do you have a dedicated sales force for Key Customers?



## The power of goals

Top performing organizations go far beyond their bottom performing peers in leveraging the power of goals, in energizing a sales team. Of course sales teams are born to achieve 'total turnover' wherever they are. Top performers extract greater value from their products and Customers because they target for the same.

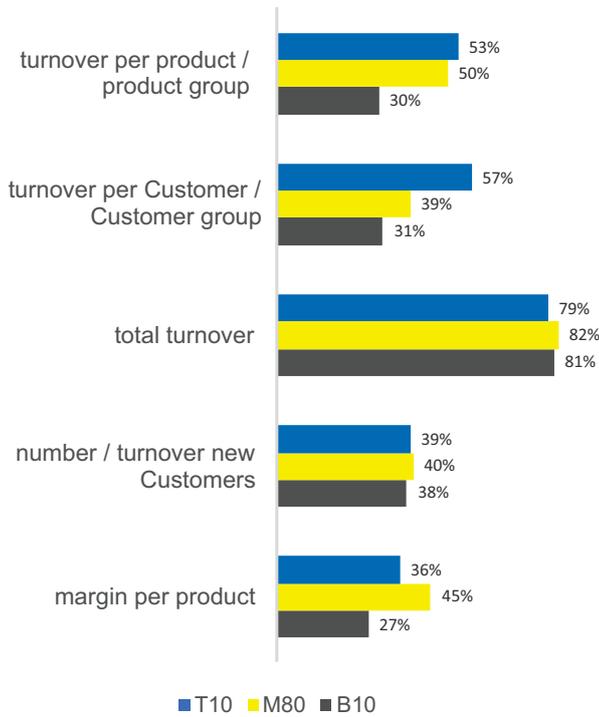
The top performing companies seem to realize that in a competitive landscape it takes more than one co-ordinate to find one's way. Those with more targets seem to benefit from the precision in direction, speed and scale that come with more co-ordinates. The caveat seems to be that higher number of targets in themselves are no assurance for high performance, in as much as having a three dimensional map alone is not sufficient to reach one's destination.

## What gets reviewed gets done

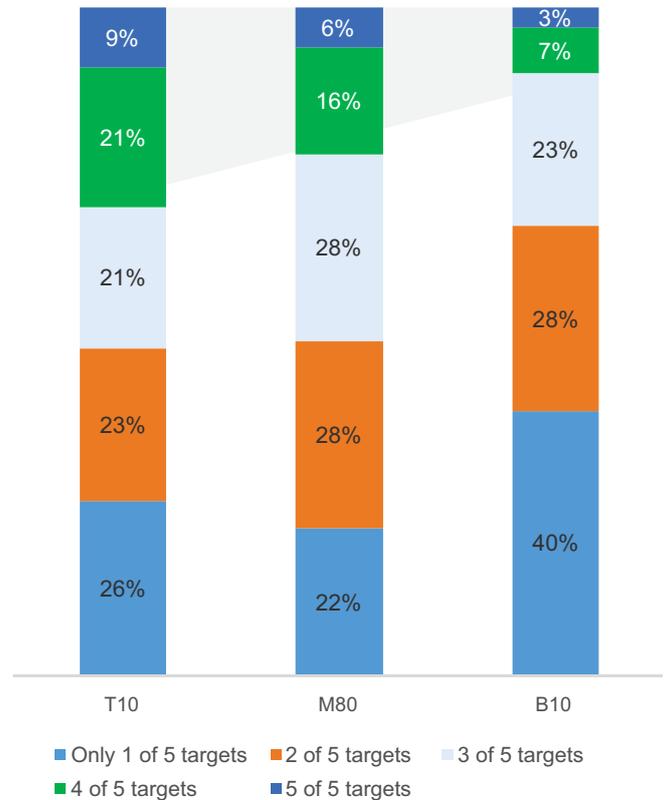
Smarter reviews seem to be another signature practice of top performers. They appear to appreciate that results cannot be managed. Only efforts can be. To this effect they focus more on effort related measures, in their reviews. While reviewing number of visits per sales person and margins per Customer seem to be top of mind for all players, the top performers do more reviews of visits per Customer and per sales process. They are far ahead of their bottom peers in reviewing value of current opportunities, margins per product and per Customer.

Top performers outdo their bottom peers not only in the nature of measures they review, they do 4 times better when it comes to reviewing more than 7 measures. What gets reviewed is what gets done.

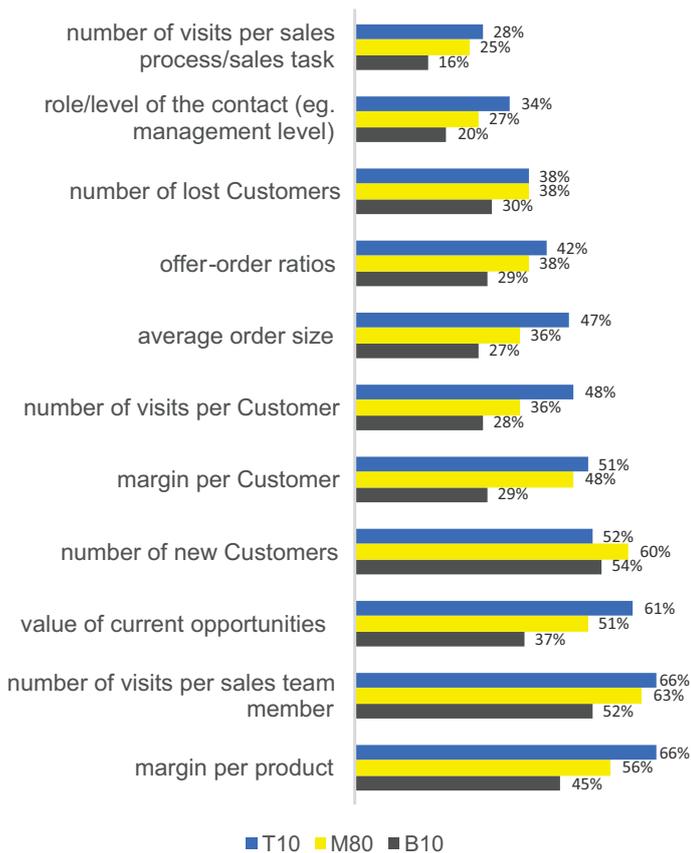
### Sales Management: What targets do companies take?



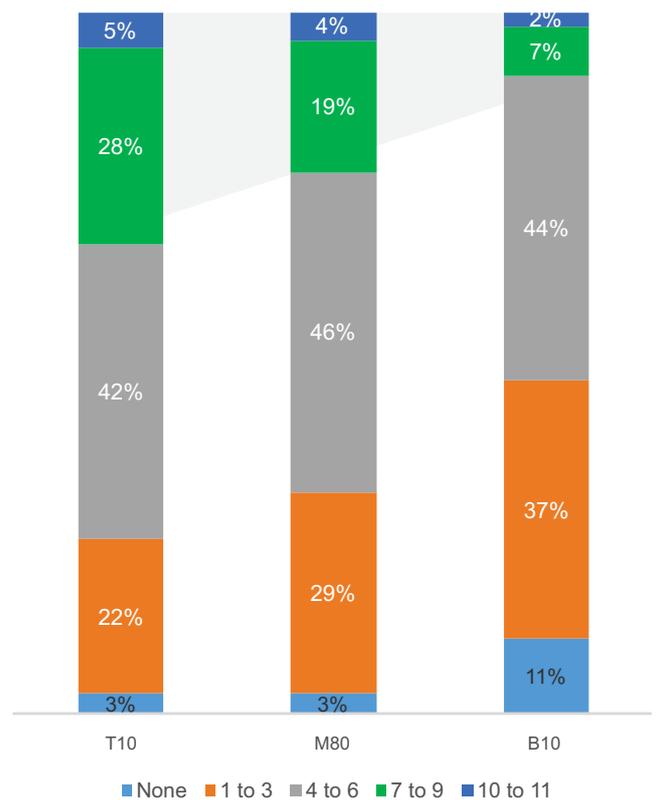
### Sales Management: How many targets do companies take?



### Sales Management: What measures do companies review?



### Sales Management: How many measures do companies review?





Dear Reader,

Thank you for your interest in the Sales Excellence Survey 2017.

Our quest to uncover the secrets of sales excellence has taken us through 20 countries, 926 responses from over 600 Organizations, across industry segments. CEOs and Sales Managers have participated in equal measure, from organizations large and small, to bring a sense of balanced perspective. At Mercuri International we thank all our 926 respondents for their contribution.

We now know how we see our environments and our Customers. This is our reality. We know how we manage our reality. We know how we do these differently across the performance spectrum. And as we reflect upon this awareness individually and collectively as a leadership group, we are sure to come up with some insights that are valuable for each of us and our respective organizations, as we plan our way forward into the new year ahead.

We also trust you feel the calling to participate in this study the next time, soon.

Do write in to us at [daniela.v.lundin@mercuri.se](mailto:daniela.v.lundin@mercuri.se) if you have a question, or a comment about this survey. We value your feedback.

Here is wishing you all the very best in 2017.

Team Mercuri International



<http://mercuri.net>